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RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 0195
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000918

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOIST CHAIRMAN PUSHPA DAHAL IS NEW PRIME MINISTER

REF: A. KATHMANDU 912

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 910

Classified By: Ambassador Nancy J. Powell. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) The Constituent Assembly has elected Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal to be the new Prime Minister of Nepal by an overwhelming majority of 464 to 113. The major parties, with the exception of the Nepali Congress, have created an alliance but have yet to make firm decisions regarding the distribution of cabinet portfolios.

CA Elects Dahal Prime Minister

[1](#)2. (SBU) In the early evening of August 15, the Constituent Assembly (CA) elected Pushpa Kamal Dahal, chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist, to be the new Prime Minister of Nepal. Dahal defeated the only other candidate, Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Nepali Congress (NC) party. Deuba, whose nomination was voted on first, received 113 votes in favor and 438 votes against. The Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist (UML) and the Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF) allied with the Maoists in a seven-point agreement to ensure Dahal's victory. Almost all of the smaller parties also voted in favor of Dahal. Dahal received 464 votes in favor to 113 against. CA Chairman Subash Nemwang is expected to inform President Yadav of the results later in the evening of August 15. Dahal is expected to take the oath of office on August 17.

Negotiations Underway for National Unity Government

[1](#)3. (C) The Maoists, UML and MPRF have begun negotiations for cabinet ministers. Upendra Yadav, chairman of the MPRF, told Emboff on the morning of August 15 that the parties have yet to decide how the portfolios should be distributed. Nevertheless, local media have reported that the parties have agreed to allocate nine ministries to the Maoists, five or six to the UML, four to the MPRF, and the remainder to smaller parties, for a total of 23 or 24 cabinet seats. There is speculation that the UML will get the Home and Foreign Ministries, the MPRF will get the Ministry of

Information and Communications, and the Maoists will keep for themselves the Finance Ministry and the Ministry of Defense, the latter of which had been a sticking point between the Maoists and the NC during negotiations to form a consensus government (Ref B). The NC is unlikely to join the government.

Bio: Pushpa Kamal Dahal

14. (SBU) Pushpa Kamal Dahal, born into a Brahmin but poor family in Kaski district in western Nepal on December 11, 1954, grew up in the Terai district of Chitwan. Dahal became attracted to communism while a teenager; he has publicly said that having to struggle while neighbors had luxuries influenced his political ideology. After completing a B.Sc. in agriculture from Rampur Agriculture College, he taught school in Gorkha district in midwestern Nepal for two and a half years in the late 1970s -- during which time he took the opportunity to organize teachers, farmers, and women for the communist cause. Dahal rose through factions of the Communist Party of Nepal before creating an armed offshoot of Maoists. He went underground after launching the "People's War" in 1996 and rarely appeared in public until the current peace process began in 2006. Dahal won both constituencies he contested in Kathmandu and Rolpa in the Constituent Assembly election on April 10, 2008. He continues to use his nom de guerre, Prachanda (usually translated as "Fearsome" or "Awesome"), because his surname identifies him as a Brahmin. Dahal has been married to his wife, Sita, for almost 40 years

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and has a son and three daughters. He speaks good English.

Comment

15. (C) Dahal's election as prime minister formalizes what has been presumed since the Maoists emerged as the leading party in the CA. Post expects continued haggling over cabinet portfolios in the coming days. The NC appears to be settling for the opposition, but has yet to firmly close the door to joining the government. G.P. Koirala is to depart the Prime Minister's residence on August 16 and move into the home of his nephew, Dr. Shashank Koirala.

POWELL